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HARRY WILLIAMSON
"Hirsau bei Calw"
The Black Forest



*Process etching
from a pen-and-ink
sketch*

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF THE ART EXHIBIT AT THE FAIR.—I
THE FIRST VIEW



O many scattered and conflicting opinions of the Fair are heard that it will be of interest to gather under this heading the impressions of a group of artists in sympathy with each other in all essential details, confining this record of criticism to the art building. It is dangerous and yet necessary to try to define their point of view. "A man is known by his appreciations," and it is safe to say that these men are in accord with what are known as the new schools in the art of to-day, the open air and sunlight painters, for instance,

and are interested in the work and influence of leaders like Monet and Cazin in France, Fritz von Uhde and others in Germany, and the strong and solid group of artists in Holland. They believe that the highest art is to be found in pictures painted for the sake of art and not "to point a moral or adorn a tale," and in this they are with Whistler. But enough has been said to indicate that they are deeply interested students of modern art and therefore qualified to speak of an exhibit which consists almost entirely of the art of that period.

It has been said that the gallery devoted to the art of Holland has the same effect on "the art people" at Chicago as the similar exhibit of that nation had at the Paris Exposition; it has the power of drawing them back again and again. This is commented on in the following brief general impressions of the art exhibit, written by Mr. Harry Williamson, whose acquaintance

Introduction

in The Hague with several of these men gives him a clear insight into the quality of their work.

Holland

"To go from the quiet of an old cathedral into a noisy street; to leave behind you the peaceful woods and plunge into the midst of a great busy town; to pass from repose to excitement, gayety, laughter, feverish haste, uncertainty, is the transit from the Dutch department at the Art Palace of the Fair to the Austrian, German, French and English sections.

"An old master in a loud, modern gold frame, a jewel amongst rubbish, a clear stream of water after a hot dusty road is the little collection of Dutch pictures compared with the great mass of the other nations' work in the beautiful white building.

"There is a kind of beauty in a noisy street of a busy town. There are occasionally green trees and quiet spots and even the glitter of signs and gaudy awnings are attractive to some eyes and some love lights and laughter and dissipation, probably the majority of people do; at any rate, the majority at the art exhibit prefer the gaudy, noisy galleries and leave the Dutch rooms in their appropriate peace.

"In these rooms the pictures come to meet you with a welcome, cordial and friendly. Each has something to say that is restful and quieting. In the Austrian department, which is next, you are seized in a current and borne so hurriedly along that you hardly care to look at separate pictures. This is shown to be the case with most or all of the spectators by their spasmodic movements and uncertain actions. You are at a crowded reception and everybody seems to be going the wrong way and you are pushed and run into and nobody welcomes you. The pictures are dancing and talking brilliantly. They are trying to show what a good time they are having and to fascinate you if they can in that way.

"You get away as soon as you can (without paying your respects to the hostess—she will never miss you in the jam) and

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hasten to the German phase of the same thing. By the time you have struggled through the crude color and glaring light here you are pretty tired, and in the English section are glad to find a few things that calm and restore you. Noise and confusion are on the walls in plenty, but now and then a quiet note of welcome is to be found.

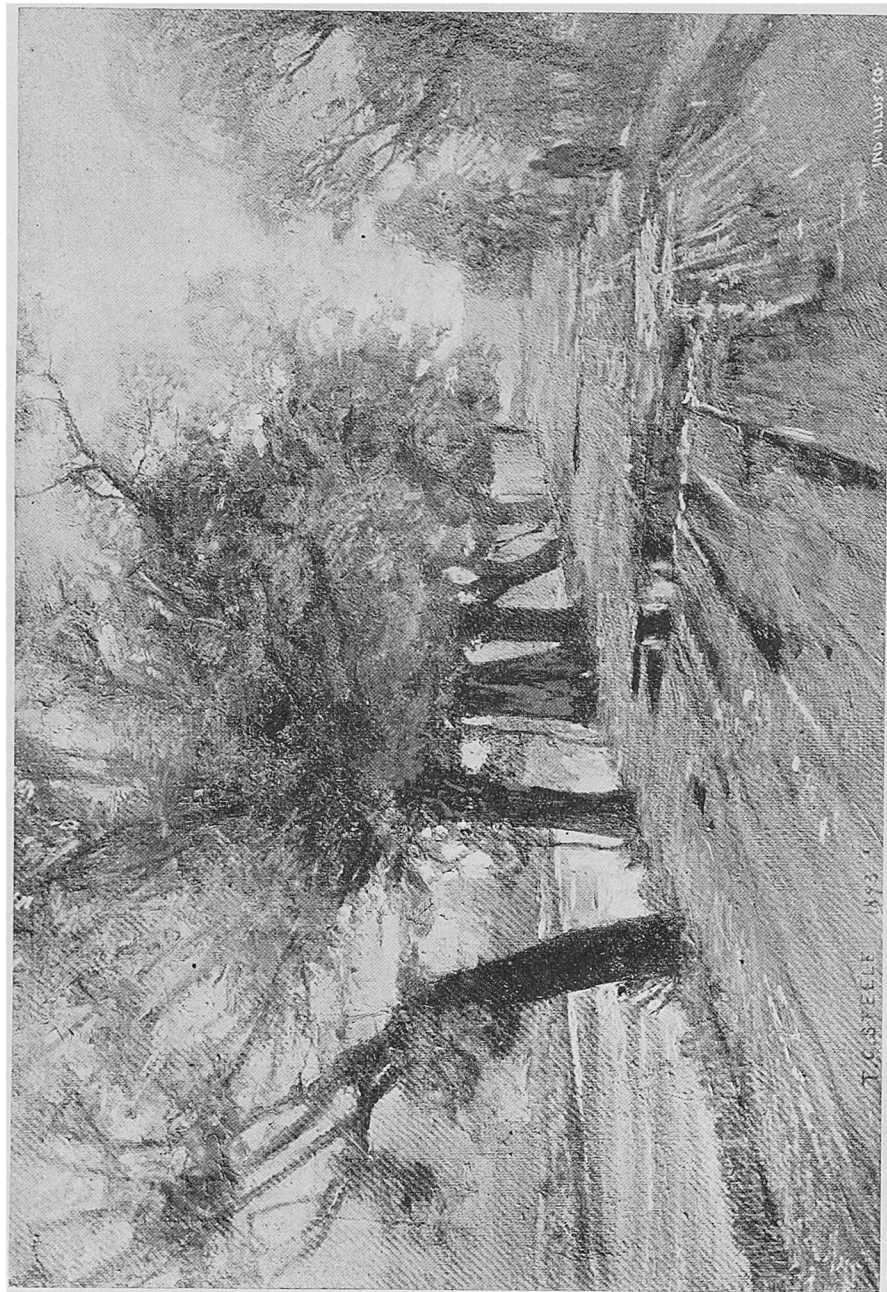
"Going from the English to the French, the deafening shouts of the canvases begin again. But there is this difference from the Austrian and German tumult, that while in these latter there is one confused hubbub of shrill cries, without a remonstrance, in the French department you distinguish a few deep, strong voices that compel your attention and check the howling of the many. You feel that the real burden is carried by a few powerful men surrounded by a clamoring mob. (The few are in fact a good many—few only comparatively.)

"The authors of these pictures certainly did not spare pains to produce them. It is sad and discouraging to an art student to see how much labor and skill have been expended on pictures that are really bad; how patience and energy and ambition count for so little compared to a single simple picture where genius has covered the weary way at a step. It seems impossible for anything short of genius to produce good work.

"How natural and healthy is the entrance into a picture by James Maris or by any of a dozen of his countrymen. There is no artificiality about these things. It is not the subjects they paint—though Holland is so picturesque. It is perhaps due more to color than to anything else: color and quality (whatever that is—who can define it?) though drawing, action, light and air are not lacking.

"It will not do to mention individual pictures in a sketch of impressions. To name the beautiful things in the Dutch section alone would take too much space. Besides, they must be seen to be appreciated and their combined effect is all that can be described. This is, in the case of Holland, a unity of purpose

T. C. STEELE



From the painting

“After the Rain”

contrasting strongly with a distracting confusion in the other schools."

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Memoranda

England has sent a Royal Academy and France has sent a Champs-Élysées Salon. There are great names missing from the exhibits of both nations. This is not the fault of the World's Fair Art Commissioners, but because the connections of art officials in those countries are with old institutions rather than with new. However, no exhibit of English art can be representative which ignores the New gallery and the Grafton gallery groups of artists, and no exhibit of French art can be representative which ignores the Champ-de-Mars. No exhibit of French art can be representative from which are missing such men as Degas, Cazin, Dagnan-Bouveret, Puvis de Chavannes, Monet, Pissaro and Renoir! Still, the English galleries are a novelty and a pleasant surprise, and France is always fine.

Italy and Spain have made the same mistake, probably wholly from indifference. Italy is weak because Fabre, Michetti, Montalbi and Tito have not contributed. Boldini and Rossi alone make the Italian section.

Spain has lost the opportunity of introducing her artists to a valuable picture market and we also have lost in not becoming acquainted with a single one of a most brilliant group of modern painters. Neither Madrazo, Domingo, Rico, Villegas, Gallegos, Reyna, Pradilla, nor Barbudo sent a canvas.

The Loan Collection, French masterpieces owned in America, is magnificent. Nearly every picture in these rooms is a gem. Here are found some of the great names missing from France's own space; all, in fact, except Puvis de Chavannes.

*IMPRESSIONS
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Germany is hardly deeply interesting, taken as a whole, but then, what picture gallery is! The great Menzel sends his "Rolling Mill," loaned by the Emperor, and Von Uhde has two canvases there, but he is practically alone.

The American section is absolutely representative. Only one important man, St. Gaudens, is missing from among the sculptors, and Bunce, Blum and A. Ryder are not among the painters; yet Blum has many drawings in black-and-white, and the collection of American art may be said to be complete. Artists are delighted to find such strides made by our men since the Centennial. We compare very favorably with France. Whether this would be true if the French section was complete is a matter of doubt. As it is we have every reason to be proud.

There are two ways of seeing the exhibit. If you can only stay a week or two, the wisest way is to send twenty-five cents to the secretary of the art department, Mr. Charles M. Kurtz, for a catalogue, marking carefully before you go the most important paintings in the collection. If you do not do this you will find when you leave that you have missed many things you should have seen and have been unduly distracted by the unimportant and the merely pretty. Remember that it takes a whole morning to merely walk through the eighty galleries, one hundred and eight alcoves, four great courts and the rotunda.

If you are going to stay a month or six weeks and intend to study the pictures—not merely see them—it is delightful to take the galleries quietly and leisurely, even at first without a catalogue, letting the wheat slowly but surely—to your accustomed eye—separate itself from the chaff.